



# CITY COUNCIL

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
HONOLULU, HAWAII

No. 21-104, CD1

## RESOLUTION

RELATING TO THE DIGITAL EQUITY DECLARATION.

WHEREAS, "Digital equity" is the condition in which all City and County of Honolulu ("City") residents, keiki to kūpuna, have the information technology capacity to participate fully in our society, democracy, and economy, including civics, social and cultural activities, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services; and

WHEREAS, digital equity requires ubiquitous and affordable access to broadband and the internet, digital tools, and the knowledge to thrive in an increasingly digital world; and

WHEREAS, the "digital divide," also known as "digital inequity," has been a pressing community issue for many years now, but has severely intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, advantaging the well-connected over those in rural communities and from socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances; and

WHEREAS, the lack of adequate broadband infrastructure, internet-capable devices, affordable high-quality broadband service, and technological know-how contributes to inequitable digital access; and

WHEREAS, digital infrastructure investments have recently faced challenges with misinformation within our communities about the effects of those technologies; and

WHEREAS, digital inequity in the City is emerging through racial, economic, and geographical boundaries and is amplified among our most vulnerable and underserved populations; and

WHEREAS, stay-at-home and work-from-home orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic have made digital connectivity an economic and social necessity across all economic sectors and demographics; and

WHEREAS, residents without digital connectivity may become socially isolated and lonely and could experience increased susceptibility to mental health issues as a result; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 American Community Survey found that 19.2 percent of Hawai'i households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 have no internet subscription, and unemployment related to the COVID-19 pandemic has likely caused additional families to cut home internet subscriptions in order to meet food and rent expenses; and



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WHEREAS, the lack of internet access disproportionately affects Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders: the percentage of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders without an internet subscription is 8.7 percent, nearly double the rate of 4.6 percent for Hawai'i's overall population; and

WHEREAS, in 1824, King Kamehameha III, Kauikeaouli, proclaimed "He aupuni palapala ko'u (mine is a kingdom of literacy)," and the King's appreciation for the written language and education resulted in Hawai'i having the highest literacy rate in the world by the mid-1800's; and

WHEREAS, today Hawai'i finds itself in a situation in which society must adopt a new form of literacy to succeed in a digital age; and

WHEREAS, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which allocates federal funds to local governments to enable distance learning, invest in broadband infrastructure, increase broadband access for low-income households, and pivot the workforce to remote options, represents a watershed moment to advance digital equity; and

WHEREAS, the City Council's 2020 Stakeholder Advisory Group for the Select Committee on Economic Assistance and Revitalization identified a priority need to increase and upgrade Oahu's broadband capacity, specifically stating, "[w]e ... consider it imperative that the City and State coordinate to the extent possible their mutually beneficial efforts to build broadband capacity, particularly on projects involving [the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism]"; and

WHEREAS, in order to successfully pivot and diversify our economy and create well-paying 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs for our residents that will create economic equity, collective actions must be taken towards a more equitable digital future; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that it supports and adopts the goals set forth in the Broadband Hui's Digital Equity Declaration and Hawai'i Broadband Strategic Plan, which was adopted by a multi-sector conglomerate of local organizations and individuals, and advances policies, programs, and initiatives towards public and/or private investment in broadband infrastructure that helps to ensure equitable access to internet services for all residents; and



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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City engage with the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Coordination Group headed by the State Broadband Coordinator, the business community, internet service providers, and community organizations to coordinate and develop an implementation plan in alignment with the goals of the Hawai'i Broadband Strategic Plan and the Digital Literacy Declaration; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City seek and evaluate federal, State, county, and private funding opportunities to support the expansion of and universal access to broadband capacity, including recommendations as outlined in the final report of the 2020 Stakeholder Advisory Group for the Select Committee on Economic Assistance and Revitalization; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to Hawai'i's Congressional delegation, the Governor of the State of Hawai'i, the Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu, the Mayor of Maui County, the Mayor of Hawai'i County, the Mayor of Kaua'i County, and the Director of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.

INTRODUCED BY:

Tommy Waters

Esther Kia'aina

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DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

April 22, 2021

Honolulu, Hawaii

Councilmembers

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
HONOLULU, HAWAII  
CERTIFICATE

RESOLUTION 21-104, CD1

Introduced: 04/22/21 By: TOMMY WATERS  
ESTHER KIA'ĀINA

Committee: HOUSING AND THE ECONOMY  
(HECON)

Title: RELATING TO THE DIGITAL EQUITY DECLARATION.

Voting Legend: \* = Aye w/Reservations

04/22/21	INTRO	Introduced.
05/18/21	HECON	Reported out for adoption as amended in CD1 form.
		CR-158
		5 AYES: CORDERO, KIA'ĀINA, SAY, TULBA, TUPOLA
06/02/21	CCL	Committee report and Resolution as amended were adopted.
		9 AYES: CORDERO, ELEFANTE, FUKUNAGA, KIA'ĀINA, SAY, TSUNEYOSHI, TULBA, TUPOLA, WATERS

I hereby certify that the above is a true record of action by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu on this RESOLUTION.

  
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GLEN I. TAKAHASHI, CITY CLERK

  
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TOMMY WATERS, CHAIR AND PRESIDING OFFICER